

NEWS

Healthier Big Apple Thanks to CREP

by Mark Dennis, Northeast Area Regional Public Affairs Specialist

Since 1997, FSA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) has shielded thousands of rural acres and served environmental causes in 12 states. Now, 9 million New York City residents can thank CREP for healthier, cleaner drinking water. The New York CREP is helping negate the need to build a multi-billion dollar, taxpayer-supported water filtration plant, while ensuring long-range water pollution prevention.

To make this happen, Delaware County FSA in New York State teamed up with NRCS, Delaware County Soil & Water Conservation District, New York City Department of Environmental

Protection (DEP), and New York City Watershed Ag Council (WAC).

The New York CREP is part of a Watershed Ag Program partnership between farmers and New York City to encourage conservation and economic viability while addressing public health concerns. DEP Watershed Ag Program Director Larry Beckhardt refers to CREP as "capstone" in a successful approach to improving New York City's water quality.

New York's CREP began in August 1998. The CREP team members set their sights on Delaware County, N.Y., a source of drinking water for NYC.

The Delaware County/Catskill Watershed is a mountainous terrain that has been farmed for centuries. One of the five reservoirs utilized by NYC is provided by waterways leading from hillsides in the county. Eleven percent of the 500,000-acre watershed is cropland, and a significant majority of the county's 400 farms are located within 50 feet of a stream. The county's streambank corridor problem was tough to address, until the planners discovered CREP. The CREP

team aspired to create 2,000 acres of riparian buffers and seed 3,000 acres of highly erodible cropland.

The environmental benefits CREP offers, plus the rental rates and incentive payments, sold CREP to the farming community. Producers in this mountainous region are good land stewards and want to preserve water quality. They realized participating in the WAC program was the first step to improving water quality and that CREP would complete the task.

The CREP team worked tirelessly with producers to reinforce the program's goals. The team members listened to the farmers' concerns, and together they worked on plans that made environmental and economic sense. Technicians flagged proposed riparian areas just to help farmers visualize the amount of pastureland eligible for the program. Delaware County CED Carol Dennis says, "The success of CREP is based on cooperative partnerships within the CREP team, and the technical planners and the farmers have made this program work."

The CREP team concentrated on farms located at headwaters of sub-watersheds rather than the main tributaries. The team has enrolled five or six farms along a number of streams. Team



A CREP livestock crossing constructed in Delaware County, N.Y. to improve New York City water quality.

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ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN

Maximizing Our Resources Through Streamlining

At the State Executive Director (SED)/District Director (DD) Conference held last September, Secretary Dan Glickman challenged FSA to develop ways to maximize our resources.

I readily took up his challenge and established a Program Delivery Task Force to work on enhancing how we deliver our programs throughout the field offices. I named a total of 24 SEDs, DDs, County Executive Directors, Farm Loan Managers, Farm Loan Officers, and Program Technicians from various state and county offices to be team members.

This diligent team has found that a number of our tasks need to be redesigned and modernized, and I'm convinced that streamlining is the way to take care of this problem. Streamlining means organizing FSA program functions to reach optimum efficiency.

The task force members took a long, hard look at how our employees do their jobs, concentrating on ending duplicative efforts without affecting the integrity of our programs. The task force developed a process they used to identify options for improving the work environment. They used the following major elements to identify processes that could be modified or eliminated:

1. Does this process add any significant value;
2. What impact does the process have on the work environment; and
3. Can we accomplish the improvement in a short time frame.

The task force then grouped the items into three areas of consideration: administration, farm programs, and farm loan programs.

Once these lists were completed, the task force members prepared outlines and backgrounds of the issues and recommendations for action to senior management and functional experts.

Representatives from the Office of Inspector General and the Office of General Counsel also attended the task force meetings to provide their advice and expertise. The Deputy Administrators responded with their comments, and the task force completed their final recommendations.

These recommendations will be forthcoming to the field offices, and I encourage all employees to take personal action to cut out duplicative and unnecessary tasks and streamline FSA for

the new year. As well as improving our program delivery for our customers, streamlining will make our jobs easier and more effective. I appreciate your efforts!

Since improving our program delivery system is an evolving process with new and refined ideas emerging, the task force will continue to meet in the upcoming year and report directly to the Administrator's office.



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Editor: Jillene Johnson

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FSA Public Affairs Staff
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Stop 0506
Washington, DC 20250-0506

HEALTHIER BIG APPLE

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members soon found that when one farmer enrolled in CREP, neighbors become eager to participate.

Delaware County FSA committee members have been instrumental in this process. They were among the first participants tapped by the CREP team to try the program. COC Vice-Chairperson Barb Robertson and her husband Jim allowed the WAC to set up a monitoring station downstream from their barnyard. Their farm was selected as an ideal monitoring site because it is the only farm in the sub-watershed and it is located at the headlands of the tributary.

The Watershed Ag Program has made a big difference to the water supply over a 2-year period. Soluble phosphorous levels have dropped and are now stabilized. WAC will measure the benefits of CREP's implemented buffers and crossings, which are expected to further reduce phosphorous levels.



HOW DO THE HOLES GET IN SWISS CHEESE?

It's a gas – really! As the cheese ripens, gas bubbles are formed by the chemical reaction. As the bubbles break, the holes are left in the cheese, which gives Swiss cheese its characteristic look.

Source: Farm Boy Fresh Market

The CREP team members are not stopping with this success. They are in the process of requesting to substitute 3,000 acres of highly erodible land in the county with an additional 3,000 acres of riparian buffers. They will also request an extension for CREP past the 2002 deadline and possibly expand the CREP boundaries to include the New York City watershed east of the Hudson River.

Given more time, the CREP team's proactive conservation approach will help the WAC meet the Environmental Protection Agency's mandate for cleaner water, while keeping the local agricultural economy viable. CREP is an instrumental tool in this process and one that USDA program farmers appreciate.

OTHER NATIONWIDE CREP SUCCESSES

- **The Illinois CREP, designed to reduce sedimentation and soil erosion affecting the Middle Illinois River and 6 major tributaries, has enrolled over 50,000 acres in riparian buffers on restored wetlands since 1998.**
- **In North Carolina, a CREP has been in place since 1999, helping the state restore shellfish habitat and protect nutrient-sensitive waters by reducing nutrient loading and sedimentation from the major river basins and watersheds of Pamlico Sound.**
- **Minnesota is using CREP to not only enhance water quality in the Minnesota River, but to also mitigate flood damage through the use of hardwood tree planting and restoration of wetlands.**
- **In Washington and Oregon, CREP riparian tree planting is a key component in an effort to restore habitat and enhance population levels of salmon species listed under the Endangered Species Act.**
- **FSA is currently working with the State of Florida to develop a CREP that will restore over 30,000 acres of wetlands and have significant impacts on efforts to restore the Florida Everglades.**

A Firsthand Look at Massachusetts Farming

by Tom Smiarowski, District Director, Massachusetts

Last fall, Massachusetts FSA employees toured dairy, fruit, and vegetable farms in Middlesex and Essex Counties. Program Technicians Barbara Matthes and Kristina Kastner from the Middlesex/Essex FSA office kindly made the arrangements for the visits.

The tour provided a great chance for attendees to observe a variety of agricultural operations, from traditional farms to innovative operations producing hydroponic vegetables and fish in a controlled environment. The tour offered participants the opportunity to see the dynamic changes taking place in agriculture, along with the difficulties farmers face on a daily basis. Attendees heard firsthand from producers how various FSA programs benefit them.



photos by Tom Smiarowski

Tour participants on a hay ride at Goodale Orchards owned by Max Russell.

BRIGHTEN UP WITH A BANANA

Feeling a little melancholy after the holidays? Eat a banana. It will cheer you up and chase away your post-celebration blues. Bananas contain serotonin and norepinephrine, which are believed to alleviate mental depression.

The banana is one of the fruits that ripen best off the plant. They are picked green because they lose their taste and texture if they ripen on the stem.

To ripen a banana faster, seal it in a brown paper bag with an apple or tomato overnight. This allows the natural gasses in the fruit to speed up the ripening. Putting bananas in the refrigerator will delay their ripening. The skin turns brown but the fruit inside does not change.

**Source: The Food Files
Chiquita**



Tour arranger Kristina Kastner; Karen Cook, co-owner of Carriage Town Orchards/Cider Hill Farm; and tour arranger Barbara Matthes.

Mississippi's James W. Redding Retires

by Yevonne S. Prewitt, CED, Clay County FSA Office, Miss.

Mississippi District Director James W. Redding is certainly missed as an FSA coworker. He retired last summer after serving many years as a noted leader of our Agency. He began his illustrious career in 1964 as a field reporter in Lafayette County. As District Director, he supervised 14 county offices. Throughout his career, he maintained his focus on serving local farmers, once spending many hours flying over ice-stricken farms to document damage and help acquire emergency funding.

Redding gained national recognition in 1992 when he was elected president of the newly-chartered National Association of District Directors. A highly-

esteemed USDA employee, he earned numerous awards, including a Certificate of Appreciation from Administrator Kelly presented at Redding's retirement reception. Redding is staying busy with his family and two cattle operations, and he continues his life-long commitment to the agricultural communities of Mississippi.



photo by Yevonne S. Prewitt

Mississippi SED David Warrington (right) presents a Certificate of Appreciation to James W. Redding.

What Do You Call a Professional Meeting Planner?

Answer: A *Certified Meeting Professional*. Two FSA employees are among an elite group of only 6,000 individuals worldwide who have achieved the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) designation. Velerie Eddleman and Nancy Toler, meeting planners for Kansas City FSA, have worked hard to attain this new level of professional distinction.

The CMP credential, offered by the Convention Liaison Council, defines the standard for professionals in the meeting industry. Eddleman and Toler, at their own expense, obtained the CMP designation by passing a rigorous, three-hour exam based on topics such as audio visual, room sets, objectives, and budgeting. Having a "CMP" after one's name represents a mark of excellence and commands respect throughout the meeting industry.



Certified Meeting Professionals Velerie Eddleman and Nancy Toler.

FSA is proud to have two in-house meeting experts like Eddleman and Toler who have gone the extra mile in personal and professional development. They are fully trained and accredited to organize and manage more effective meetings, conferences, etc., while negotiating the best possible deal for FSA.

According to the Convention Liaison Council database, Eddleman and Toler are apparently the **only two USDA employees** to attain the CMP distinction. **This makes the fact that they are both from FSA even more impressive.**

Arkansas FSA's Brigadier General

Yes, you read it correctly. When Arkansas FSA employee Ronald S. Chastain puts on his other hat (or helmet), he transforms himself into a different sort of community worker. Chastain is a Brigadier General in the National Guard. The general commands the 39th Infantry Brigade – with 3,480 troops, the largest National Guard brigade in the state.

Chastain, a Supervisory Program Specialist in the Arkansas State Office, hails from the small town of Branch. He attended Arkansas Tech University where, after completing training in the Reserve Officers Training Corps, he was awarded the rank of second lieutenant. He joined the National Guard in 1974 and has served in a variety of command and staff assignments in the 142nd Field Artillery Brigade, the 87th Troop Command, and the 39th Infantry Brigade.

More recently, Chastain commanded the 25th Rear Area Operations Center of the 18th Airborne Corps during the Desert Storm conflict. His mission was to set up a logistics base in Iraq, but the war ended before his assignment was completed. "But I got to see a lot of Iraq," he remarked.

An FSA employee since 1974, Chastain says his work with both FSA and the National Guard takes some juggling. "It helps to be on compressed time and that the Arkansas SED is so supportive of my service to our country." The two jobs complement each other; Chastain says the leadership skills he learns with each job apply to the other.

Chastain has been awarded numerous decorations during his military career. Among his most notable awards were the Meritorious Service Medal with three Oak Clusters and the Bronze Star.



Pam Chastain pins a star on her husband, Brigadier General Ronald S. Chastain, during a ceremony last summer at Fort Chaffee.

FSAer's Daughter Reigns in North Dakota

Christi Guthmiller, a Program Technician in the New Town/Fort Berthold, N.D. office, is one proud parent. In September, her daughter Michelle was crowned Miss North Dakota USA 2001 in Bismarck. She was selected over 13 other contestants. Eighteen-year-old Michelle also won the Agency Models and Talent Modeling Award.

"This was Michelle's first pageant," says Christi. "We're all very excited for her." Michelle won a \$16,000 scholarship from the University of Mary and a \$900 scholarship from Bismarck State College. She'll represent the state in February 2001 in Gary, Ind. at the Miss USA Pageant. Proud mom and family will be there to cheer her on.



Michelle Guthmiller.

State Fair Project in Mississippi

by Yevonne S. Prewitt, CED, Clay County FSA Office, Miss.

Employees of Mississippi FSA are proud of our Agency and our efforts to help farmers, agricultural landowners, and citizens of our rural communities. This was the main reason a group of dedicated employees voluntarily worked on an FSA exhibit for the 2000 Mississippi State Fair last fall.

Our group decided the exhibit should have "something for everyone." We displayed program brochures and a continuous-play video recorded by FSA employees. The video showed a number of state farming operations and practices such as cotton and soybean harvesting. We also created a children's play area with toy tractors, trucks, and wagons. We distributed FSA coloring books created by Mississippi District 1 employees.

To make the exhibit eye-catching, our group decorated it with beautiful chrysanthemums, corn stalks, hay bales, cotton bales, soybeans, greenery, pumpkins, and scarecrows. Thousands of people who stopped by commented on how it was one of the most attractive exhibits at the fair!

In addition, we prepared 100 teacher packets containing USDA brochures, reproducible coloring sheets, refrigerator magnets, and pencils. We coordinated with Farm Bureau Women to present the packets to school groups touring the agricultural petting zoo and exhibit hall.

Our group could not have carried out this project without the support of our SED, David Warrington. Many thanks to him. Everyone involved feels we shared the "real FSA story" with thousands of people, including many

appreciative children. We also built camaraderie among FSA employees across the state. We experienced FSA volunteerism at its finest – we worked together and it sure was enjoyable.



photos by Yevonne S. Prewitt

Mississippi FSA employees volunteering at the exhibit are Todd Bullock, Chairperson; Betty Tingle; Rebecca McKenzie; Stanley Collins; and Deborah Smith. Many other FSA employees contributed to the exhibit's success, including Shirley Green; Martha Fay James; Jimmy Kent; William W. Love; Joe McFadden; Jeanne Monday; Doug Naron; Tommy Owens; Jean Phillips-Hudson; Yevonne S. Prewitt, Co-Chairperson; James and Carol Redding; Ervin D. Torrence; and Robert Walters.



Children enjoying the FSA exhibit.

Cow Comfort -- American Style

Humans aren't the only ones relaxing with home massaging gadgets.

Cows can now enjoy a massage of their own thanks to the Happy Cow Cleaning Machine, a four-foot-long, hour-glass-shaped brush that's turned by an electric motor. When a lucky cow walks under the brush, a sensor is triggered that starts the motor, and stiff bristles remove parasites and dirt from the cow.

"The cow gets a cleaning and a really nice one-minute massage," said Dean Birschbach with Agromatic, a Wisconsin distributor of the machine.

The German-made machine is popular in large dairy barns

where cows often sleep on rubber mats and wear computer chip necklaces to monitor their health and milk production. "It's all part of providing cow comfort," Birschbach said. "When cows are comfortable, they produce more milk."

Happy Cow machines are left on 24 hours a day, so cows can get a quick grooming and massage whenever they feel the urge. "It's not unusual for cows to wait in line for their turn at the machine," Birschbach said.

Some cows are pretty smart and learn how to use it right away," he



said. "Others watch for a while before they figure it out." But not a one gives up its place in line!

Source: Rick Barrett, Business Reporter

Answers to December's Puzzle

A		H		E	S	C	A	R	O	L	E	
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H		R		E		A		R	A	N	G	E
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S	P	O	T		D	A	R		W	O	O	D

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Location	Event
January 1		New Year's Day
January 7-11	San Antonio, Texas	Administrator Kelly and Associate Administrator Parks Shackelford to attend Crop Disaster Program Training
January 7-11	Corpus Christi, Texas	Larry Mitchell, Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs, to speak at 2001 Farm and Ranch Show
January 15		Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

Note: The above is subject to change.